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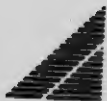
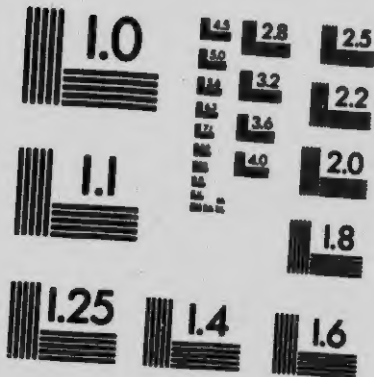
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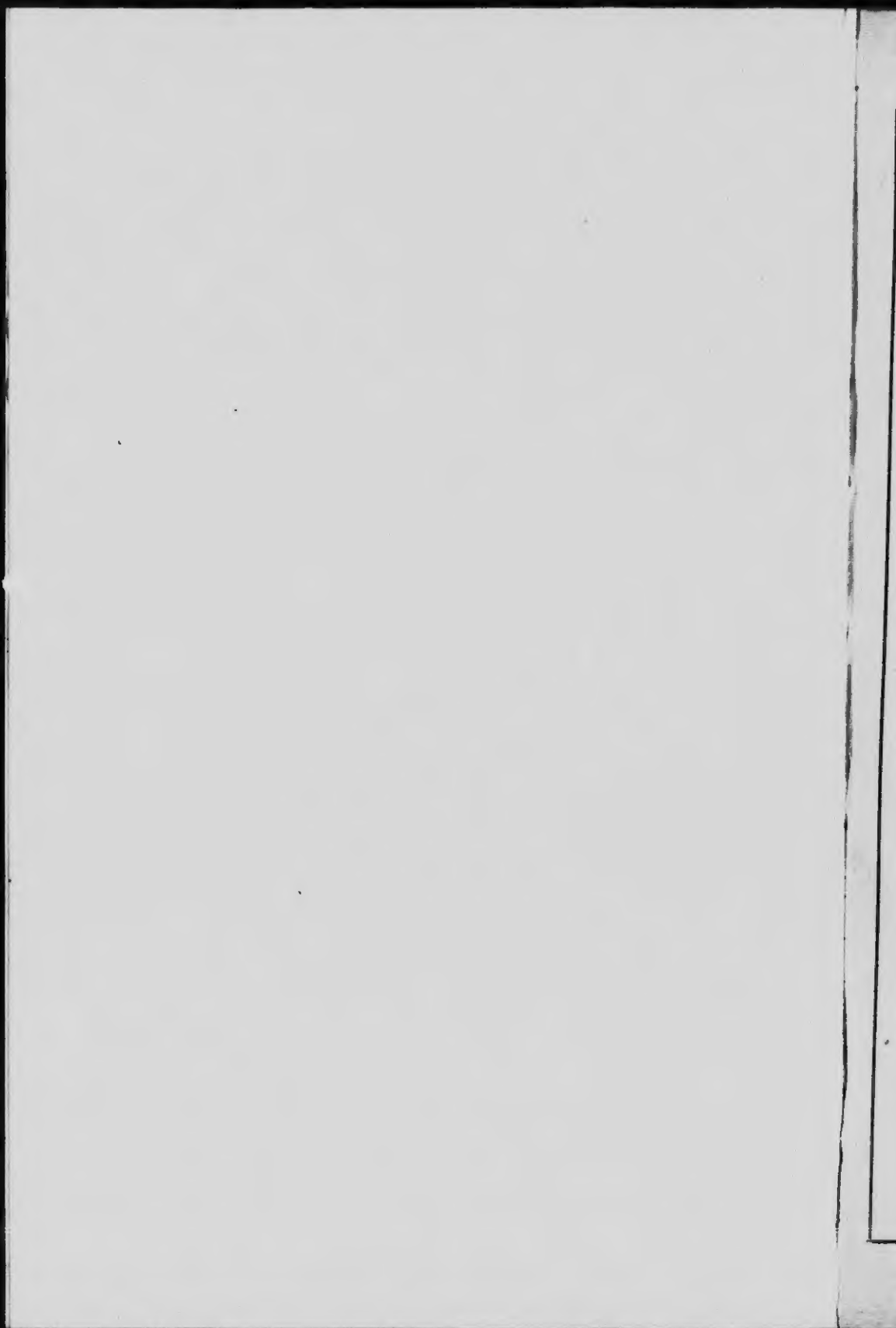
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LETTERS TO  
THE CANADIAN CLUB

ON THE

Addresses of SIR FREDERICK POLLOCK,  
and MR. GEOFFREY DRAGE

BY

Sir Sandford Fleming

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OCTOBER, 1905,

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## TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

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The Canadian Club has received the following two letters from Sir Sandford Fleming on the subject of the addresses of Sir Frederick Pollock and Mr. Geoffrey Drage before the Club on "Imperial Organization." The Officers of the Club feel that these communications should be published in order that the public at large, as well as the Members of the Canadian Club, may have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the views which these letters contain in respect to a matter of the greatest public interest.

The object Sir Frederick Pollock and his colleagues had in their patriotic mission to Canada was to come into close relations with as many of our people as possible during a necessarily short visit. They desired to obtain individual opinions respecting the best course to be followed in order to advance Imperial unity, having in view the interests of each part of the Empire. While in Ottawa, they invited expressions of opinion on the important matter which they are investigating. As they have now left for England, the undersigned begs to state that any communications sent to him will be duly acknowledged, and if required, forwarded.

HAMNET P. HILL,

Secretary.

110 Wellington Street,

OTTAWA, Oct. 27th, 1905.

LETTER No. 1

OTTAWA, October 21st, 1905.

Members of the Canadian Club:—

It was a great satisfaction to me, as I am sure it was to every one present at the gathering this afternoon, to hear Sir Frederick Pollock and Mr. Geoffrey Drage set forth their views on a subject of the very highest importance—the unification of the Empire.

When they concluded, I would have wished, had it been in order, to give expression to my own thoughts and their bearing on the great subject which these distinguished gentlemen have been good enough to bring before the Club. As there was no opportunity afforded me of expressing my views, I trust there will be no impropriety in submitting a few words in this form.

I cannot but feel that, in common with our fellow-subjects in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere, we in Canada are under a debt of gratitude to those gentlemen in England, represented by Sir Frederick Pollock and Mr. Geoffrey Drage, who have given so much time and thought to the common interests, and have taken so much trouble concerning our future. We especially owe our warmest thanks to these public-spirited gentlemen themselves who have crossed the Atlantic as envoys to us, who have journeyed through the Dominion on their patriotic mission, who on their return to Ottawa have explained to the Canadian Club the views held by them, and who desire to ascertain how far these views will fit in with Canadian conditions.

It appears that the conclusions they have reached are the outcome of much consideration and active discussion on the part of from 50 to 100 men of high position in the Mother Country, of persons holding almost every kind of opinion in English politics, and representing many interests.

Sir Frederick, as spokesman for all these gentlemen, read a paper on the subject at the Royal Colonial Institute, London, in April last. The views submitted today to the Canadian Club Ottawa, are substantially the same, and they must be regarded here, as they were on the other side of the Atlantic, of the greatest weight and well worthy of the most serious consideration.

I think I speak correctly for the Canadian people when I say that they welcome enlightenment, the more so when it comes from so high authority; but I am not sure that they are ready, or that the people of all or of any of the other portions of the Empire are

ready, to accept or reject any plan of organization, however excellent it may appear at sight. It is, I think, regarded of the first importance that they should act with deliberation, that they should be well informed, that they should be afforded the fullest opportunity of an interchange of thought, and thus obtain that knowledge of the wants and wishes of each other so necessary to wise decision and action.

When in England last summer, I was much impressed by reading the discussion on the paper of Sir Frederick Pollock at the Royal Colonial Institute. Among other things stated, one of the speakers reminded those present that so sound a statesman as the late Lord Salisbury considered it dangerous to attempt to force the various parts of the Empire into a mutual arrangement for which they are not ready. He said: "If we will be patient and careful, there is a tremendous destiny before us; if we are hasty, there may be the reverse of such a destiny; there may be the breaking apart of those forces which are necessary to construct the majestic fabric of a future Empire."

These and other considerations lead me to think that those associated with Sir Frederick Pollock have scarcely attached sufficient importance to the sequence of their proposals. Without going into particulars, the two main proposals made are, first, an Imperial Council, and, second, an Intelligence Department for the purpose of acquiring knowledge for the use of the Council, and possibly for other purposes.

The first, as explained by Sir Frederick, is not seemingly too ambitious a proposal, and, as some better arrangement than now obtains is recognized to be desirable, it may prove to be the best. I am at present offering not the slightest objection to it. I do not suggest that it be renounced; but I am inclined to think that, if it be the best, there would be the best chance of it receiving general assent eventually if preference be given to the second proposal in the first instance. What the Empire really requires without unnecessary delay is a properly organized Intelligence Department: that is to say, some effective means by which the British people in all climes would mutually exchange information on every subject of common interest.

In addressing the Canadian Club, Sir Frederick animadverted on the criticisms of Mr. Richard Jebb in the London press on some of the features of the scheme advocated. I have read the articles referred to; and, while the two gentlemen do not see eye to eye respecting the proposal to establish an Imperial Council, it is clear to my mind that they have a common goal in view in the distance. The difference between them in details merely illustrates the difficulties which are so frequently raised against any scheme, however excellent it may appear to those who have studiously prepared it. In one particular, the two gentlemen are more nearly



agreed, and that is with respect to the necessity for some means of collecting intelligence for mutual enlightenment.

For myself, I am a member of a number of associations, each aiming to promote the consolidation of the Empire. I have listened to or read everything which has been said or written thereon which has come to my notice. I have myself given the subject much thought; and am satisfied that, to strengthen Imperial cohesion, the course advocated by the Chambers of Commerce everywhere—and perhaps more especially by the Ottawa Board of Trade—is well calculated to bring fruitful results with the least delay. These bodies recommend the establishment of an Imperial cable service uniting the great divisions of the Empire with each other, and all with the Mother Country—a service encircling the Globe, which, while greatly promoting trade, would in the highest degree foster free intercourse between the various groups of British people in all lands under the sway of King Edward. The President of the Ottawa Board of Trade reported at the last annual meeting that the Council has “placed itself in communication with commercial associations and individuals in all parts of the Empire. The replies received strengthen and confirm the views that there should be established as speedily as practicable a chain of State-owned Cables and Telegraphs to link together in the most effective manner the Mother Country, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India, South Africa, and the West Indies.”

The President further reports that singularly favourable responses to the communication of the Board have been elicited from well known sources in every quarter of the Globe; that not a single adverse reply has been received; and that no argument has been advanced against the public policy of completing without loss of time the comprehensive chain of Imperial Cables, of which the Pacific Cable forms the initial and most important link.

By such means the prohibitive charges heretofore exacted on the intercourse of the British people around the Globe would be set aside, in some cases the tax would be entirely removed, and it would become possible to invoke the aid of the press as one of the most powerful agencies in advancing Imperial organization. I have elsewhere given my views in some detail on this point, and I would refer to a pamphlet issued and circulated by the United Empire Club of London, and likewise an article in the Empire Review for August last. In those publications it is pointed out that the State-owned Cable across the Pacific is engaged in transmitting ordinary traffic only a few hours each day, and lies idle at the bottom of the ocean not less than twenty hours in every twenty-four. It is shown to a demonstration that a free press service can be established during a portion of the idle hours of the Cable without adding in the least to working expenses. It is suggested that this means of instantaneous communication be-



tween Countries widely separated by the ocean be more fully utilized than at the present time; it is urged that the chain of Empire Cables be completed, and, when not employed in ordinary paying traffic, that arrangements be made by which they would be used under the control of an Intelligence Department in the free transmission of news and general information for daily publication in any newspaper in all parts of the British world. But I must leave the articles to which I refer to speak for themselves.

On this date a hundred years ago events were transpiring near the entrance to the Mediterranean which rendered the British Empire of the Nineteenth Century, and many succeeding centuries possible. Since then a process of development has been going on, and it appears desirable to some persons that development should now be accelerated. We must be careful, however, that progress may not be arrested by undue haste. The British people are grouped in democracies under monarchical forms, and they are entitled to claim the right to be placed in possession of a general knowledge of all matters which concern their wellbeing. It is manifestly of the first importance that they should be well informed, and that they should gain clear ideas; until then it is not probable that any "cut and dried" scheme which materially affects them will readily be assented to.

If my memory does not fail me, it was said, in the discussion on the paper of Sir Frederick Pollock at the Royal Colonial Institute, that the British Constitution is regarded as a model of strength, for the reason that it was not invented by any body all in one piece, but has grown through process of long years. By analogy, if the greater British Empire is to have a constitution that will stand the stress of time, not a few think that it had better come by growing. To accelerate the process of evolution, I am satisfied that the most certain course is to begin by utilizing to the fullest extent that heaven-sent means of transmitting human words across the ocean, and by cultivating the freest and most friendly intercourse between all those people who go to make up the Empire.

In submitting these remarks, I need scarcely state that I do so in no spirit of fault-finding. If I am correct in the belief that one of the purposes of the gentlemen who have spoken to us is to ascertain how far we approve of their proposals, it is fitting that we should speak frankly. For myself, I have done so, and I believe I have spoken the mind of many others. I am sure we all very fully appreciate the public spirit and kindness of the distinguished gentlemen from England who have been so good as to take us into their confidence.

Faithfully yours,

SANDFORD FLEMING.

*With the Compliments of  
The Canadian Club of Ottawa.*

ADDENDUM TO LETTERS ON "AN IMPERIAL  
INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT."

Since the letters of Sir Sandford Fleming were made public by the Canadian Club a few days ago, a number of communications have been received from well known men. One writes from Eau Claire in upper Ottawa Valley. "I do not remember ever to have read anything that interested me more, and I sincerely hope the idea will be carried out." A Toronto constitutional Lawyer, writes: "The papers about an Imperial Intelligence Department I have read with great interest. It would indeed be a grand achievement if the idea could be carried out, as it would be far more directly effective than any improvement of mere constitutional machinery could be."

Another well known Canadian, writes: "You have struck the nail on the head when you say that the Intelligence Department is the first necessity. It is mutual knowledge that we want and when we get the inter-Imperial Cable service, the inter-Imperial Press will soon follow. Without the State Cable service nothing practical can be gained. It is a pity that imperialists do not centre their thoughts and efforts on this one idea and impress on the several Governments the necessity of a complete Intelligence Department. It is the only practical common sense proposal yet presented for bringing the great British sister nations into the closest possible relations."

The Professor of Political Science in Queen's University writes:

"I have just read those letters to the Canadian Club of Ottawa and the central idea expressed in them I entirely agree with and have often expressed. Indeed I am so fully convinced of the transcendent importance of getting the British people into touch with each other not on one line only, but on all possible lines, that I quite expect when this is reasonably well accomplished, they will find the need for any special or formal machinery, such as an Imperial Council, etc., quite unnecessary; having then, as a matter of fact, secured something as far superior to it as the broad, flexible, and ever up-to-date British constitution is superior to any possible written constitution."

As the subject is of high importance and of common interest, criticisms favorable or otherwise, are invited.

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*LETTER No. 2.*

OTTAWA, October 26th, 1905.

Members of the Canadian Club.

On the 21st instant I ventured to address a letter to my fellow members, giving expression to the thoughts which arose in my own mind, on hearing Sir Frederick Pollock and Mr. Geoffrey Drage, speak on the great subject which they brought before the Canadian Club on that day. In my letter of the 21st I ventured to suggest that these gentlemen would do well to reverse the sequence of their proposals. Before they left Ottawa a few days afterwards, they appear to have decided to do so.

Yesterday they addressed a public meeting in the rooms of the Montreal Board of Trade, when Sir Frederick informed those present to the effect that he and his colleagues had discovered that the time was not ripe for the first part of their proposal, viz. the formation of an Imperial Council, but that the strongest reasons exist for immediately instituting an Imperial Intelligence Department.

It is a matter of much satisfaction to me that these gentlemen have reached this wise conclusion. An Intelligence Department controlling the circle of state telegraph cables known as the "Empire Cables," during a portion of each day for the exchange and transmission of mutual knowledge between all the great political groups of British people would prove, as I have elsewhere pointed out, to be of the highest practical value. By such means, information of common interest collected in all parts of the Empire would be published simultaneously in the daily newspapers of each country. The effect would soon be to remove much of the ignorance which prevails, and gradually bring the whole British people in both hemispheres to a good understanding of each other through an intimacy heretofore quite impossible of attainment.

The question of an Intelligence Department comprehending all that I have indicated in my first letter—the completion of the chain of Empire Cables and their limited free use by the Press in the interest of the whole people, is no side-issue merely. It is infinitely more. It is a prime necessity in the development of the Twentieth Century Empire; without taking this first step I doubt if any real progress, any forward advance whatever can be gained. An Imperial Intelligence Department such as that outlined cannot fail when instituted to prove a distinctly formative influence in working out our destiny. What then is our common duty?

I enclose an editorial from the Montreal Star of yesterday as a sample of the comments which we may look for generally in favor of the modified proposal of Sir Frederick Pollock and his associates.

Yours faithfully,

SANDFORD FLEMING.

### **BRITONS SHOULD KNOW EACH OTHER.**

The suggestion of Sir Frederick Pollock that there should be an Imperial Intelligence Department, whose task it would be to gather up in all corners of the Empire any information of value to the commercial and merchant leaders in other parts of the Empire, is a capital one. There is, perhaps, no bar to the progress of real Imperial unity today so great as our mutual ignorance regarding each other. We are always marvelling at the ignorance of other British subjects respecting us, delightfully unconscious apparently that our ignorance regarding them is quite as sublime—and ridiculous.

There are a lot of what might be called strands of Empire, to which we should pay attention, and not make the mistake of tugging all the time at the more conspicuous cables. Mr. Drage called attention, for instance, at the Board of Trade to the fact that a British subject must take out twenty-eight patents in order to protect an invention throughout what we boastfully describe as one nation. Then there is our stupid practice of giving a great postal preference to American over British periodicals which are to be distributed in this country. The blame here does not rest with us in Canada, but it does rest upon a British Government; and surely the influence of an Imperial Intelligence Department, making clear what the effects of such a blunder are, might lead to a reform.

The nearer the people of the various "Britains" get to each other, the easier it will be for the largest plans of Empire to be pressed to a successful consummation when the hour strikes. If we do not know each other better, we are certain to misunderstand some of the demands which we will each make; and misunderstanding leads directly to distrust. No Imperial Federation—or whatever it may be called—will be born in a night. It must at least be a growth, and that growth can only be wisely directed when we have an intelligent knowledge of all the surrounding conditions.

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